

## Benjamin Ronder With His Brothers Dovid And Menachim



These are my brothers. From left to right: Benjamin, Dovid, Menachim Ronder. The picture was made in Kaunas in 1930.

I was born in Lithuanian town Kedainiai [about 100 km to the west from Vilnius]. In 1920s-1930s it was a small district town. The population was a little bit over three thousands, two thirds out of which were Jews. There were strong Jewish traditions in town.

My father cultivated cucumbers and sold them wholesale. I do not know for sure how my parents met, but I think they had a prearranged marriage. In 1898 my parents got married in chuppah in the main synagogue of Kedainia. There were a lot of guests at the wedding, Jewish musicians. In word, it was a true Jewish wedding.

In a year, in 1899 my eldest brother Abel was born and in 1902 -David, in 1904 - Mordechai, in 1906 - Leibl, in 1910 - Menachem, in 1912 - Benjamin, and in 1914 - the only sister Beile.

The house, where I was born, was one-storied long building made by grandfather Leibl, which was practically out of town, close to the gardens. I vaguely remember that place. When the family was getting larger (practically all my brothers, beside my single brother Menachem, Leibl, who left for Argentine and Morduchai who left for Meriampol) brought their wives in our house. Then started having children, there was less and less room. Then mother sold the old house and bought another one in the downtown. It was kind of angular, two-winged, two storied wooden house like most Lithuanian houses. There were seven rooms, a large kitchen, where the whole family met at dinner in the evening.. Our family was neither rich nor poor. We had a modest living, but had all necessary things my mother and brothers worked very hard. They did not have easy bread. Menachem dealt with husbandry more than anyone else in the family. In spite of the fact that he was not the oldest, he took over father's business. Menachem treated me very well, trying to be like a father to me so that I would not feel like being an orphan. Even now I sincerely consider him to be my second

father.

In 1919 the tribulation came to pass: 17-year old lad Dovid, fell under the train. Both of his legs were cut off. Fortunately, Dovid survived and even after his return in Lithuania in 1920 he got married and was happy in his own way. His wife Rivka, who came of a very poor family, married Dovid having deep affection towards him. She was not only a beauty, but she was also very kind and outgoing person. Besides, she was very intelligent. Dovid and Rivka had a son Volodya, who was a year and a half younger than me. He and I retreated together during the war. We were very close friends. Dovid and Rivka stayed in occupation and were killed in 1941.

My favorite brother Menachem remained single and lived with us. He kept on working with father's business- husbandry and sales of vegetables. He served in Lithuanian army. I have his picture in the uniform. Menachem was apolitical, he was fond of sports and he was a member of the Jewish sports organization Beitar. Menachem was shot by fascists in our town during the first days of war.

Benjamin, the youngest brother, was an underground komsomol member. When the Soviets came to power, Benjamin started working as an accountant in one of the soviet organizations. He married local Jew Miriam Ioffe. Miriam got pregnant before the outbreak of war. She and Benjamin were shot during the first days of occupation in Kedainiai. along with other komsomol members.